

Development Update

The Connection has objectively reported on the positive decisions, setbacks, delays and progress of our vision and development journey over the past 8 years. In keeping with that commitment, there were **four major development decisions and activities** in September and October 2010 that resulted in exciting news for Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church of Bethesda-Chevy Chase (CELCC) and our community.

By way of a background, in November 2004 the CELC Congregation (after significant input from the 2003 CELC Ambassador's Group, subject matter experts, the Congregation, and Council) voted to **APPROVE** the move forward with the long-term mission and development vision to continue to remain as a vital part of the Bethesda community for generations to come. That vision was further incorporated by our 2005 testimony in the Woodmont Triangle Sector Plan public hearings and amendment that was **APPROVED** in January 2006.

In November 2006, CELC filed formal development plans that the Montgomery County Park and Planning Staff, then the Planning Board, unanimously **ENDORSED** in August and September 2007. In December 2008, a County Hearing Examiner recommended **DENIAL** of the same plans based on her compatibility concerns. The County Council, having those conflicting recommendations, and then hearing Oral Arguments, voted to **REMAND** the project back to the Hearing Examiner and the church in February 2009.

Since February 2009, CELC and its representatives held multiple sessions with staff and neighbors to improve the application as ordered by the Council Remand. That resulted in:

Montgomery County Planning Department Staff Report was released on January 25, 2010 with a recommendation to **APPROVE** the Remanded application.



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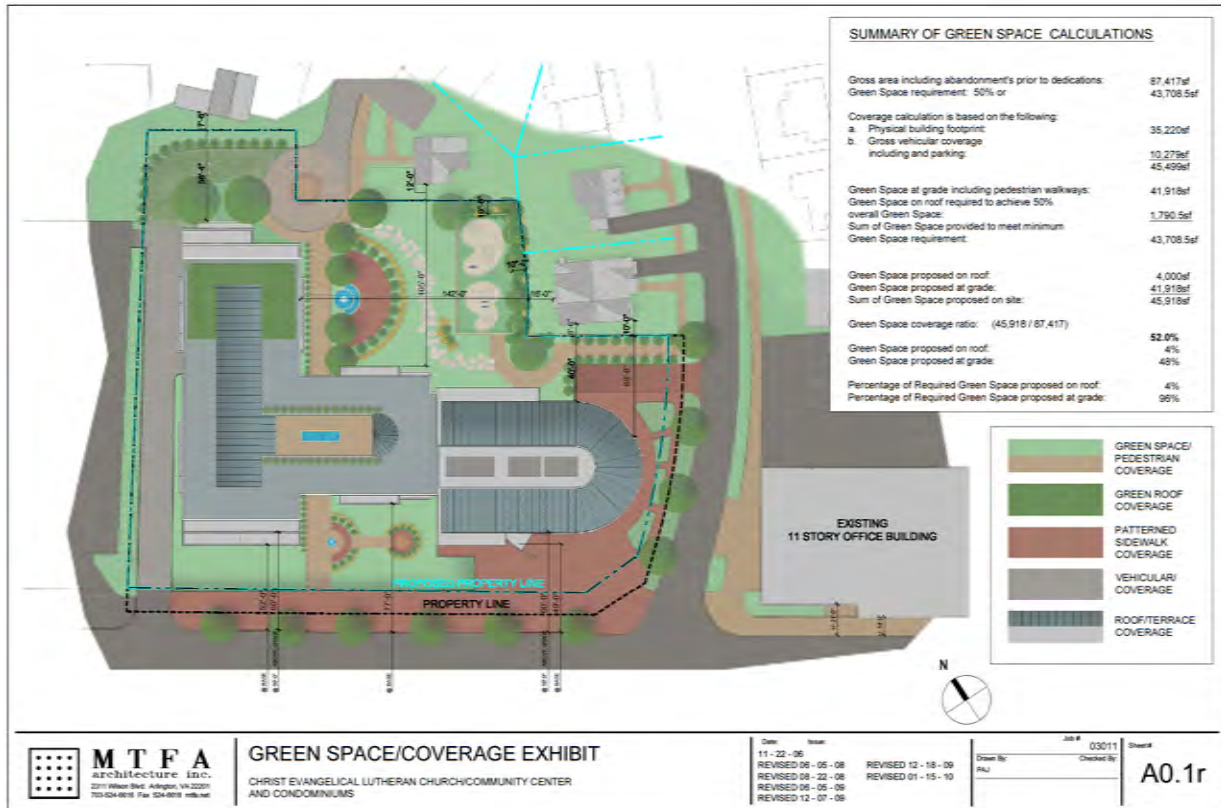
BUILDING CONTEXT VIEW
FROM RUGBY ROAD
CHRIST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH/COMMUNITY CENTER
CONDOMINIUMS

Date: Issue:
REVISED 06 - 05 - 09
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Montgomery County Planning Board met in an open session on February 18, 2010 and voted 3 to 1 to **APPROVE** the Remanded application.

Excerpts from that Board meeting and vote are summarized partially from the text released in the February 19, 2010 memo from the Office of the Chairman of the Montgomery County Planning Board.

*"Following discussion with the staff, the applicant's attorney and public testimony, the Planning Board (by a vote of 3-1), recommends **APPROVAL** of the PD-44 rezoning application and the revised development plan for the reasons set forth in the technical staff reports".*

"The Board expressed the position that the revised development plan ensures compatibility with adjacent single-family development by providing increased setbacks, reducing the height and mass of the proposed buildings, and providing open space within the proposed development".

After the Board approval, parties went into a second round of hearings in March 2010 with 3 days of formal expert witness and public testimony and cross examination before the Hearing Examiner. As requested by the Examiner, CELC's witnesses presented the case for compatibility based on comparison of the existing conditions of the property and the remand plan against all appropriate county code. The hearing included a thorough review of the two recent County Park and Planning staff and Board recommendations for approval.

Sample testimony of community support for the project provided to the Hearing Examiner included the following:

From Melanie Folstad, a local involved and interested citizen:

"The design is especially attentive to green space and environmental considerations. The design also

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addresses ability to provide expanded capability for a wide variety of needed county quality of life services....for the Montgomery County community for future generations.

It is a carefully and well considered plan and I hope, with your support, it will move forward”.

From Ginanne M. Italiano, President, The Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce:

“Throughout the past several years, representatives of Christ Lutheran Church have communicated regularly with the community at large including the Greater Bethesda-Chevy Chase Chamber of Commerce, regarding the status of their project. They have asked for our input and have incorporated many of our suggestions into the new plan.

We support the Park and Planning staff’s recommendation for approval of the Local Map Amendment and believe that Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church’s new design is even better than the previous presentation. It is a perfect fit for Woodmont Triangle and Bethesda as a whole”.



CELC delegation at the County Council Session on October 19, 2010

From Sally W. Kaplan, Immediate Past President, Bethesda Cares, Inc.:

“Christ Lutheran has had a great program of outreach in the community and is increasing that outreach. Their new facility will enable them to expand their programs which will include MPDU’s (critical in the down county area), non-profit functions and office space, child care, after school programs and inter-generational programs and of course, support of Bethesda Cares”.

Opposition counsel and witnesses provided the Hearing Examiner with their own views of the Staff and Board’s findings for approval of the new design and place in the Bethesda community.

After the case closed on March 29, 2010, the original Hearing Examiner moved to a different county position, and a new Hearing Examiner was assigned to review all facts and exhibits on record and provide his remand recommendation to the County Council. That report was originally expected by mid May 2010, but two requests for extensions were requested by the Hearing Examiner office and approved by County Council.

That brings us to four critical events or decisions in September and October 2010:

First, on September 30, 2010, the new Hearing Examiner released his 205-page recommendation to overrule the Planning Department Staff and Board **APPROVAL** recommendations and to **DENY** the application mainly on ground of compatibility.

Second, On October 8, 2010, CELC’s Counsel filed a request to have Oral Arguments heard by the Council. That was **APPROVED** by County Council and placed on the October 19, 2010 agenda.

Third, on October 19, 2010, County Council heard Oral Arguments and testimony from CELC counsel as well as opposition counsel and the Hearing Examiner. After lengthy discussion, in-depth questions and debate, the Council first took a vote to accept the Hearing Exam-

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iner's recommendation to **DENY** the Remanded application. That straw vote lost by a 6 to 2 margin. A second motion to **APPROVE** the Remanded application was proposed and that straw vote carried by 6 to 2 in favor.

Fourth, on October 26, 2010, the Council formalized their October 19, 2010 **APPROVAL** vote into a binding resolution with a 7 to 2 **APPROVAL** decision.

As we have continued to do all during the challenging, 8-year process, the CELC leadership team is committed to continue to reach out to not only our Congregation but to community leaders, neighbors, as well as current and potential new partners. The purpose is to seek their input and support for what would be our fourth new worship and community

facility at Old Georgetown and Glenbrook Roads since that modest farmhouse in a very different Bethesda was first purchased in 1937. That invaluable input will all be considered as we review the next major steps of site plan, construction, and eventual occupancy and project completion.

Please keep the mission, vision, project, and the community in your thoughts and prayers as we move into another important phase of our mission and development journey. If there are questions, please do not hesitate to contact any member of the Graceful Growing Together Steering Committee or CELC Council.

Submitted by the GGT Steering Committee: Ray Albright, Don Cumming, Barry Lemley, Andy Masetti, Mark Miller, Pastor Marv Tollefson, and Tim Smith

